

# A Fiery Flynt Grabs Attention for His Mix of Porn and Politics

By Howard Kurtz  
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In the last five weeks, Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt has sued the U.S. government for barring reporters from Grenada, declared as a candidate for president, sued a Cincinnati radio station for censoring his remarks, sent free Hustler subscriptions to every member of Congress and the Supreme Court, bought full-page newspaper ads linking the CIA to President Kennedy's assassination, purchased FBI videotapes vital to the drug-trafficking trial of John Z. DeLoorean and been arrested for refusing to produce the tapes.

Flynt's outburst yesterday before the Supreme Court, in which he unleashed a string of obscenities at the justices, was merely the latest example of what his friends say is a calculated effort to call attention to his peculiar brand of politics and pornography.

For all his antics, the wealthy publisher is said to want more than anything to be taken seriously.

One close associate called Flynt "a man in a wheelchair who's been paralyzed for five years, who feels he's been mistreated and ignored" and who is seeking "an element of revenge . . . by turning the establishment on its ear."

Herald Price Fahringer, who represented Flynt in several obscenity cases, said, "He had the money and means to fly around the country in his own plane and rub elbows with celebrities . . . He was driven to achieve wealth and all that can bring you, but once he reached that goal he wanted to go further. He wanted to be a force in this country."

Flynt, 40, rose from a poor Kentucky farm

to the seat of a small publishing empire by concocting a mixture of sex and raunchy humor tailored to the tastes of working-class men—and by defying the legal system at every turn. He describes his philosophy in the December, 1983, issue of Hustler:

"Nothing is sacred to me . . . not the poverty that gnaws at the land, the corruption of our political system, the insanity of the military who want to blow us all to hell, the phoniness of the venerable institutions or the mawkish love offered by the churches . . . Hustler exposed it all, irreverently satirizing everything. So Hustler was busted. And I was the one who was hauled into court. I am convinced my crime was that I appealed to the common man."

Flynt has paid a price for his relentless crusade. He was shot and permanently paralyzed in 1978 as he walked to court in Lawrenceville, Ga., during one of his many obscenity trials. Police never found the assailant.

After struggling through four operations and years of tremendous pain, Flynt seems to have regained his fire. In recent days:

- He vowed to use his presidential campaign to test the nation's obscenity laws by airing commercials featuring hard-core sex acts. Flynt's lawyers have told the Federal Communications Commission that no radio or television station may censor his ads as long as he is a legal candidate. Worried FCC officials say that it is possible that their equal-access rules will supercede the statutes that normally bar broadcasting obscenity.

- He told reporters that a Jimmy Smith helped him obtain the tapes of federal agents discussing a cocaine deal with auto maker DeLoorean. Flynt said he bought the tapes for

\$25 million. An attorney for J.J. Smith, the office manager for a Los Angeles law firm that previously represented DeLoorean in the drug case, said that Smith is cooperating with the federal investigation of the leak.

- Flynt formed a First Amendment committee and paid workers \$100 a day to distribute leaflets outside The Washington Post, protesting its refusal, on legal grounds, to publish part of a Flynt advertisement. The ad, as published in The Post, pictured a 1978 Flynt publication with the headline: "JFK Murder Solved. Killing Coordinated by CIA."

Flynt runs his media conglomerate from a gold-plated wheelchair, surrounded by armed bodyguards, in a \$5 million mansion in the exclusive Bel Air section of Los Angeles. Together with confidantes and his wife, Althea, who once posed nude for Hustler, Flynt has expanded his operations into a lucrative magazine-distribution network and a mail-order business for sex products.

Hustler ranks third among men's magazines, behind Playboy and Penthouse, with a circulation of 1.1 million and annual revenues of \$47.8 million, according to the industry publication Folio. Flynt also publishes Chic, which has a circulation of 162,000 and annual revenues of \$6.2 million.

Flynt launched Ohio magazine while living in Columbus in the mid-1970s. A successful venture, it later was sold.

"He wanted a forum where he could speak and speak profoundly," said a former editor of the magazine. "But he wasn't very professional about it. He thought some people were crooks, and he wanted us to go out and prove it."

According to the former editor, Flynt once

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